

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

JAMES AND JUDE.

THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE. Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M. A., LL. B. The General Epistles of St. James and St. Jude. By the Rev. Alfred Plummer, M. A., D. D. \$20, pp. x, 476. A. C. Armstrong & Son.

This is a creditable work, and recognizes fairly, though not always as fully as might be desired, the conclusions of modern Biblical criticism. The Epistles of James and Jude were disputed in the early Church; that is to say, many doubted whether they were inspired, and Apostolic productions. The earliest list of New Testament writings, a fragmentary canon made about 170 A. D., does not mention James. Ireneus (200) classed James and Jude among writings which he regarded as editing, but not inspired. Clement, of Alexandria (180) classed Jude among the inferior writings. Tertullian (200) omits James entirely from his canonical list, and puts Jude in his class of editing but not inspired writings. Origen (250) ranks both James and Jude among the doubtful writings. Eusebius (340) does the same. And finally, when we get down to the last half of the fourth century and the first half of the fifth century, we find Athanasius and Augustine admitting them into the canonical list of inspired books, where they have remained ever since, not without some protest, however. Luther wanted to reject James, calling it "a right strawy epistle." Jude is thought to be a poor transcript of Second Peter. Oecolampadius classed James and Jude with the Apocryphal books as not inspired. It is, however, only fair to say that Luther's contemptuous opinion of James was due to the fact that he thought it contradicted the Pauline view of justification.

On the other hand, there are quotations from and allusions to these epistles in many of the Apostolic fathers. The Peshito Syriac version contains James, which Dr. Plummer considers a strong argument in favor of its genuineness. That the Epistles did not receive more notice in the early Church is doubtless due partly to the fact that their tone is practical rather than doctrinal, and partly to the fact that they are very short.

As to James, there is little doubt that it was written before the Pauline controversy, and by James, the Lord's brother, who, according to tradition, was Bishop of Jerusalem. It was written to Judean Christians, who were inclined to attach too much importance to faith without works. That under these circumstances it should be supposed to be in conflict with Paul's doctrine of justification by faith only, is very natural. But the conflict is verbal rather than material. The faith without works of James is not the justification by faith only of Paul. But while there is no essential conflict, there is undoubtedly a different point of view. While James put the accent on works, without denying the efficacy of faith, Paul put it on faith, without denying the necessity of works. Paul and James are complementary to each other, and for this reason, if for no other, it is a cause for rejoicing that the writings of both these Apostles finally found their way into the canon.

We think, however, that Dr. Plummer errs when he declares that the presence of James in the Peshito version already referred to is a conclusive fact in the external evidence concerning the epistles: for that he so, the absence of 1st Peter, 1st and 2nd John, and Jude from the same version ought to be a conclusive fact against them, an argument which the learned commentator would hardly allow. As a matter of fact, the early versions are not in themselves a conclusive witness as to the canonicity of the New Testament. They should be supposed to be in conflict with Paul's doctrine of justification by faith only, is very natural. But the conflict is verbal rather than material. The faith without works of James is not the justification by faith only of Paul. But while there is no essential conflict, there is undoubtedly a different point of view. While James put the accent on works, without denying the efficacy of faith, Paul put it on faith, without denying the necessity of works. Paul and James are complementary to each other, and for this reason, if for no other, it is a cause for rejoicing that the writings of both these Apostles finally found their way into the canon.

The dispute concerning Jude arose largely because the writer quotes with approval two apocryphal legends concerning a dispute between Michael the Archangel and the devil over the body of Moses, which he has also, it was comparatively little known to the early Church. The last objection has already been referred to. There is little doubt that the epistle was written by one of the two persons known in Scripture as Jude or Judas, to rebuke and condemn certain persons who were trying to subvert the peace and purity of the Church. The tone of the epistle is practical and evangelical rather than doctrinal.

The writer's reference to certain apocryphal legends concerning a dispute between Michael the Archangel and the devil over the body of Moses has provoked much controversy. How it has been used, could an inspired writer give the stamp of approval to a myth? After dismissing the theory of a special revelation, Dr. Plummer thus meets this difficulty: "Have we any right to assume that inspiration raises a writer to the intellectual position of a critical historian, with power to discriminate between legend and fact?" Let us reverently examine the features which inspired writings actually present to us, and not hastily determine beforehand what properties they ought to possess."

This is an entirely rational view of the subject, but unfortunately, many Christians are estopped from taking it by the Creed of their Church, which has laid down a hard and fast theory of inspiration that admits no possibility of error on the part of the Biblical writers.

Dr. Plummer's exposures of these two very interesting epistles are at once discriminating and revealing, and will be most useful to all who desire to study them carefully.

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